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May 14, 2014

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### **Wyden Statement in Support of Sylvia Mathews Burwell for HHS Secretary**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

The Finance Committee meets today to discuss the nomination of Sylvia Mathews Burwell to be the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

If one thing has become clear in the month since the President announced Ms. Burwell's nomination, it's that she is tremendously well-respected – not only by people she's led and worked with in the administration, but by Democrats and Republicans in Congress, too.

That should come as no surprise. Last year, the Senate confirmed her nomination to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget by a vote of 96 to zero. That was a big – and well deserved – bipartisan endorsement, and Ms. Burwell's accomplished background and long record of results shows why she's earned it. She's a graduate of Harvard and Oxford, where she was a Rhodes Scholar. She served in the Clinton administration as a top economic advisor to the President and Treasury Secretary. And she has years of experience in the nonprofit sector.

First as COO and then President of Global Development at the Gates Foundation, she led efforts to address some of the most pressing global health challenges of this era. As the head of the Walmart Foundation, she was a tireless advocate for veterans hiring programs, and she was a leader in the fight against hunger in our communities. Ms. Burwell has also been a steady hand and an effective, communicative leader at OMB. She helped navigate the difficulties of the government shut down last fall. And in the year that she's served as director, the federal deficit has continued to plummet.

There is also one other important fact to keep in mind as we consider Ms. Burwell's nomination. You can't lead this generation's OMB without being steeped in health care. It's the biggest structural challenge in the budget and an essential part of the job.

Everyone knows the biggest task ahead of Ms. Burwell, should she be confirmed as HHS Secretary. The Affordable Care Act will be her central focus every day she serves as secretary. There are plenty of ways both parties can work together to improve the law and ensure America doesn't go back to the days when health care was just for the healthy and the wealthy.

There is also lots of promising news about Medicare for Ms. Burwell to build on as secretary. For example, Medicare's rate of spending growth is slowing. According to HHS data, spending went up by only 1.9 percent over a two-year period. That's slower than the overall economy, and it's far behind the

historic pace. The cause of lower premiums and a stronger, more secure future for Medicare is significantly boosted by this news.

With the bipartisan support of members of this committee, there have been big improvements in Medicare transparency. As the country's largest single purchaser of health care, Medicare has got to lead the way in making sure that all consumers and taxpayers have the information they need to get the best value for their dollar. I look forward to working with you, once you're confirmed, to continue the effort.

Next, Congress has never been closer to repealing the flawed Medicare physician payment system and replacing it with bipartisan reforms that reward the quality of care, rather than the quantity. I'm looking forward to working with you, once you're confirmed, to fix the Medicare physician payment system this year. After that is accomplished, the committee looks forward to working with you on the single biggest challenge in Medicare's future – managing chronic care.

Outside of the health care arena, this committee will need to maintain its close relationship with the HHS secretary on issues like foster care, child welfare and family support services.

Ms. Burwell, congratulations on your nomination and thank you for joining the committee today. The Senate's 96 to zero confirmation vote for your current role was clear evidence that people respect you and your work. And following a thorough review, I hope to have your nomination approved by the committee and the Senate as quickly as possible, and with equally strong bipartisan support.

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